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causes in the water. The *Kalioun* is almost universally used in Persia. The tobacco which is used in the East is remarkable for the fragrance and delicacy of its perfume, and the scented water in the vase adds considerably to the soothing influence of the tobacco itself. The women are accustomed to the Houkka, the Narguileh, and the Kalioun, as well as their lords, and the apartments of the harems are fitted up with these magnificent and costly pipes.

### MORAL ASPECT OF CHINA.

Of all the systems of religion professed in the world, there is none which numbers so great a proportion of mankind in its folds, and there is none so little understood in Europe, as Buddhism. This extraordinary faith, which is professed by the majority of the inhabitants of China, indeed by the great masses of the people in that country, is also the ruling religion in the Eastern Peninsula, comprising Burmah, Siam, Lao, and Cochin China. It is held by the vast hordes of Tartars that wander through the plains and valleys of central Asia from the Caspian Sea to the frontiers of China. Thibet may be regarded as its northern head-quarters, for in Lassa, its capital, resides the Grand Lama, who professes to be an incarnation of the great saint and founder, the prophet and man-god of Buddhism. In Ceylon, too, in the south of India, Buddhism counts its adherents by the million; so that all the south-east of Asia, the most thickly-peopled portion of the earth's surface, is Budhistic. So little is known, however, of the statistics of these countries, that the followers of Budha have been variously estimated at from one hundred and eighty to three hundred millions of mankind.

The philosophical faith inculcated by Confucius, pre-eminently the Chinese prophet, is at the present day maintained, and that only nominally, by the court and higher classes of Chinese society alone. Confucius lived in the latter end of the sixth century before Christ, and although he passed his life in struggle and obloquy, and ended it in obscurity, his descendants have ever since enjoyed the highest honours and privileges for nearly seventy generations. They are indeed the only hereditary nobility of China. They are found principally in the neighbourhood of the district where the sage lived; and it was computed, a century and a half ago, that they numbered no less than 11,000 males. Through every revolution in Chinese history, their honours and privileges have remained intact. Thrones have been upset, royal families destroyed, and new ones elevated in their place; but the descendants of the great teacher remained as before, their honours secure, their dignity uninvaded. In every city of the empire of the first, second, and third ranks, there is a temple dedicated to Confucius. The civil and political rulers, nay, the emperor himself, are all equally bound to do him reverence. It is mere ceremony, however; there is no heart whatever in either the admiration professed for the man, or the obedience pretended to be given to his precepts, for his morality was far too pure to suit the degenerate taste of modern China. Altars, it is true, are erected in high families to Confucius, in the hall of ancestors; sweet-smelling gums are burnt in the chamber, with frankincense and tapers of sandal-wood; fruit, wine, and flowers, are placed upon the altars, and appropriate verses chanted. But the whole service is merely one of form; and whilst outward adherence is thus given to the system inculcated by Confucius, Buddhism alone maintains any hold upon the masses of the people, and the hold which it maintains is far from being a beneficial one. Introduced from India, it has maintained its sacred language, the Pali, in China; Chinese symbols are tortured to express its sounds; Chinese tongues refuse to utter its words distinctly; so that the ceremonies of the Buddhist temples are unintelligible to the people not less than to the priests, and the whole system of religion has long degenerated into an unmeaning mummery, retaining little hold upon the minds of the people, whilst outwardly its temples are grand, its ceremonies imposing, its priests richly dressed, and its monasteries well appointed and full.

Gotama Budha, also called Sakya Mouny, was the founder of the faith. He lived either a thousand or six hundred years before our era, and first preached his doctrines in northern India. Being the son of a king, he easily obtained protection and converts in the first instance, setting himself up, not so much as the preacher of a new faith, as the reformer of the old and almost worn-out Brahmanism which still lingers in India. That such a man as Gotama actually did live, no one who has examined the faith has for a moment doubted; and as the history of his life was not written till centuries after his death, we need not wonder at the marvels related of him, or the extraordinary miracles which he is said to have wrought.

He left behind him both priests and priestesses, whose office it was to preach his doctrines and to attend to the images and offerings in the temple. In most Budhistic countries, the order of priestesses has long been extinct; but it still lingers in Burmah and China, the nuns, if such they can be called, being, however, esteemed as little better than beggars. Nothing can exceed the ignorance of these Chinese pretenders to sanctity. The abstraction of the mind from earthly things, and the fixing of it on spiritual things, is regarded by Buddhism as one of the most beneficial mental exercises; and some of their priests seem to have so far succeeded in this matter, that it is impossible to tell if they have any mind at all. Their look savours of vacancy and want of thought; they stare wildly at all around them; earthly things have indeed ceased to interest them in many cases; but too often, it is to be feared, it is the look of idiocy that thus roams unmeaningly from place to place, from countenance to countenance, from object to object. The mind, thoroughly unhinged, but too often detaches itself from earthly things altogether, and is no more to be lured back to its old haunts.

With such religious teachers, with a system prevalent of which they understand nothing but its corruptions, and love nothing but its absurdities, we cannot wonder that the moral condition of the Chinese, notwithstanding their advance in civilisation, notwithstanding their quick-witted skill and progress in many arts, is most deplorable. "Much reliance," says Dr. Gutzlaff, the eminent Chinese missionary, "was placed at the commencement of the war upon the idols. None, however, appearing to assist the Chinese army, and their shrines having been desecrated without the gods taking vengeance for their wounded dignity, the popular belief in Buddhism is fast giving way to scepticism." Indeed, it is notorious that in many households the images were thrown down and discarded; and even in Ningpo, the head-quarters of Chinese Buddhism, superstition is on the wane—has been long on the wane. Everywhere throughout the vast empire the people seem waiting for something better; they have almost entirely shaken off the trammels of their old faith, and as yet see no light in the mists a-head, or rather only the faintest dawn of light, still very far from their own abodes, or from their distinct comprehension."

The pernicious habit of opium-smoking, so prevalent amongst the Chinese, tends to destroy what little religious feeling is left amongst them. In Hong-Kong, for instance, an insignificant island, with a population hardly amounting to 20,000 in all, a man pays the British government 1,500 dollars a month for farming the duties on opium alone; and yet, of these 20,000 inhabiting the island, a considerable proportion, probably one-sixth, is European, and the Europeans are but beginning to adopt the odious practice now—they have not yet attained the perfection in self-ruin to which the unfortunate Chinese have advanced. Even into England itself the practice has been largely imported by those who have returned from the East, and more than would be supposed possible of the wasted frames, sunken cheeks, and wild staring eyes, that one meets in the Strand or Cheapside, may be attributed to this unwholesome enjoyment.

In Hong-Kong, the largest consumers of the drug are the shopkeepers, sailors, quarrymen, and dissolute adventurers, driven for their evil practices from the continent—the very plague-spots of the island. In most districts of China, however, mandarins and soldiers are the greatest consumers of

opium: mandarins, because it is an expensive amusement, and bespeaks courage and wealth to indulge in it—the soldiers, because it is regarded peculiarly as a military and chivalric vice. The sailors, too, inhale its fumes largely; with them it is one of the most piquant of their pleasures; their perilous life leads them to peculiar and selfish indulgences, and the vigour with which they enter upon their career soon gives way, under the baneful influence of opium, to languor, senility, and exhaustion. The agricultural labourers are by far the most numerous classes in China, and amongst them there is little opium-smoking, if any. It is, fortunately, too expensive a luxury for them to indulge in.

With respect to the use of opium generally, a recent writer on China asserts, that the larger the consumption of the drug, the more frequent is crime of every description—the more extensive the trade in it, the greater the moral misery which spreads over the country. As a general rule, those that give themselves over without restraint to this moral mania, become wasted and attenuated in person—they walk about, looking like gaunt skeletons—are often covered with running sores, and disfigured by all kinds of cutaneous eruptions. Not that all these result from the opium alone, but its excessive use is invariably accompanied by excessive gambling, intermingling with the worst people in the worst places, and hence the evils hinted at.

The difference between the coast and agricultural population of China is strikingly exemplified by the contrast between the inhabitants of Hong-Kong and those of Chusan. Hong-Kong was originally a very poor place, occupied by a small and depraved native community, engaged principally in quarrying, fishing, piracy, and bartering. The arrival of the English on the island, and their permanent settlement there, naturally attracted together crowds of adventurers, of gamblers, and of the bad of both sexes. "There is, perhaps, no place in the world," said a Hong-Kong magistrate, "that presents a more fearful criminal calendar." Nor would it be easy to name a vice which does not degrade some portion or other of the population of the island. Chusan, on the other hand, has entirely an agricultural population all attached to the soil. The families possess a sufficiency, and, having so much to do, are all peaceably disposed, quiet, and regular. The entire population, in fact, consists of quiet and orderly people, inasmuch that adventurers of doubtful character, and vagabonds, have little chance of success in their schemes, because they are everywhere shunned and watched. An instance of this fact occurred during the British occupation of the island. Some pirates and desperadoes were hired by the Chinese government to kidnap a few natives who had been unremitting in their services to the British. This band of ruffians crossed over to Chusan, settled on the coasts, and pretended to be engaged in commerce. The population looked upon them with suspicion, and a popular meeting called upon the authorities to get rid of them. The authorities would have nothing to do with the matter. The populace stormed and threatened the intruders, and they, although they affected to laugh at the threats, at length decamped. A few months afterwards however, they re-appeared, and seized one of their victims privately and secretly. The whisper was spread abroad that the pirates were again at work. On a sudden the populace rose like one man, the ruffians were all seized and thrust into a boat—eighteen or twenty of them—with stones round their necks, and when they had pushed out into the sea, were all thrown overboard. Not one of them, it is believed, escaped; and the police magistrate, who relates the occurrence, declares, that so secretly were the measures of the populace taken, that he knew nothing of it until it was all over, nor could he ever discover who were the perpetrators. He was fully aware, however, of the worthless character of the people executed. This summary Lynching of eighteen or twenty people beats brother Jonathan's performances in that line hollow.

As a general rule it may be stated, that the inhabitants of the northern provinces of China—the provinces surrounding the capital—are better educated, and more energetic, than those residing further to the south. In the history of the

rebellion which still threatens to overthrow the Chinese monarchy, and to found a new, liberal, and reformed kingdom in the place of the old, illiberal, and prejudiced monarchy, this fact has been strangely exemplified. In the southern provinces, the progress of the rebels or of the patriots—which ever we may choose to call them—has been extremely rapid. They overran province after province, each province of the size of a moderate European kingdom, with little difficulty and with great rapidity. In the north, however, their progress has been much slower. They have advanced painfully and laboriously, step by step, town after town causing a stoppage for a week or a month, as the case might be; until now that they have got within two hundred miles of the capital, we hear of few new successes, of no rapid conquests. The Manchoo dynasty, which still nominally rules the destinies of China, relies most upon the troops of the north, and upon its Tartar auxiliaries, who have been pouring into China Proper for months, but still without producing any marked result upon the contest.

For the present, however, we shall confine ourselves to the moral aspect of the country; and truly this moral aspect is as strange a spectacle as the eastern or the western world can afford. We have here two or three hundred millions of mankind shaking off old faiths that they have held for centuries, as one would put off the thin garments of summer on the approach of winter. Buddhism is a mass of unmeaning mummery to them, its scriptures unintelligible, its moral dogmas not understood, and, if understood, little regarded. Their forefathers have believed in Buddhism; but to them it is an unmeaning faith, a sound without an idea, a symbol without a name. It has already lost its hold upon their hearts, and they are but waiting, doubtless, to cast aside its nominal, as they have already lost its real, influence. The philosophy of Confucius has for centuries been a sound signifying nothing to the masses of the people; so that they may literally be said to be a people waiting for a religion. Confucianism and Buddhism have been tried, and have been found wanting. They have been proved to be quite inadequate to keep a living faith alive in the hearts of millions thirsting for some kind of intellectual and spiritual food. They have had their day, and that day has gone. It remains to be seen whether Christianity will not take their place, and extend its humanising influences over the most thickly populated region of the earth.

Nor is it in the matter of religion alone that the social state of the Chinese portends speedy disruption. Justice exists theoretically in China as elsewhere: The noblest of moral maxims are common to the jurisprudence of Confucius and of Gotama, but the practice and execution of justice is guided solely by self-interest, and corruption is so general that it scarcely excites an exclamation when brought to the light of day. The highest degree of skill in the magistrate and the judge is, how to circumvent—the sole object of the legal officer, how to realise the most money. The prisoner once arrested is at the sole mercy of the mandarin, who listens indeed to whatever may be brought forward in favour of the accused, but whose sentence is unshackled by any guide but his own will, and who clothes that decision in legal language as it may suit his purpose; nor is it difficult to cite such chapter and verse of the code as may appear to support his decision, however much at variance its spirit and the context. Appeals to a higher court are perfectly legal; and even the meanest individual may carry his case before the Supreme Court of Requests at Peking; but every step of the process involves enormous outlay—an outlay altogether beyond the resources of any but the very rich, and it will probably succeed at an earlier stage by means of bribery. It is against the decisions of the just but obscure magistrates that the rich man's wealth carries the day; the wronged poor man is without redress. Those once thrown into prison may be kept there for any length of time that suits the inclination or the interest of the magistrate; and many thus perish in gaol whose innocence is a matter of public notoriety, but whose incarceration is an object of desire to some rich opponent.